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SUBJECT: H1N1 Update Oman

REF: MUSCAT 399

CLASSIFIED BY: L. Victor Hurtado, Deputy Chief of Mission, State, Muscat; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (U) Summary: -- No incidence or suspected cases of H1N1

-- MOH Official confirmed active surveillance program

-- H1N1 tests kits to arrive later this week

-- Screening will commence at airports later this week, including thermal scanning

End Summary.

¶2. (U) Dr. Salah Al Awaidy, Director of Communicable Disease Surveillance and Control for Oman's Ministry of Health (MOH), informed attendees of measures the Omani Government is taking to address H1N1 at a previously planned workshop for private health care facilities at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Muscat on May 5, 2009. While the focus of the workshop was not on H1N1 or communicable diseases, conference organizers requested Dr. Al Awaidy address the crowd at the end of the workshop. However, organizers did not permit the floor to be open for questions after his remarks.

¶3. (U) Dr. Al Awaidy reaffirmed that there have been no suspected cases of H1N1 in Oman and that Oman has instituted a surveillance program for influenza and influenza-like illness (ILI). ILI incidence reporting is currently collected monthly and surveillance laboratories are located at the Public Health Laboratory in Muscat, South Bhatina, and in the Dhofar region. Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) surveillance is in place in Royal Hospital Muscat, Dhofar, South Bhatina, and South Sharqiya. Dr. Al Awaidy also noted that H1N1 test kits would soon be available in Oman and reconfirmed that the MOH has a stockpile of Tamiflu. Al Nahada Hospital will serve as Muscat's quarantine centers while other regions are in the process of designating ward space in their hospitals. Private and public health care facilities are required to report any suspected cases of H1N1 to the Director General of Health Services. Any hospitalization cases will be treated at the regional quarantine facility regardless of nationality. Doctors and clinics will follow guidance and case definition and management per Center for Disease Control and World Health Organization standards.

¶4. (U) Dr. Al Awaidy said that screening will soon commence at the international airports in Muscat and Salalah. Arriving passengers will be required to fill out a questionnaire denoting point of embarkation and countries visited. Doctors and nurses will be posted at airports to examine passengers exhibiting

possible symptoms of influenza. Oman also plans to install thermal scanning equipment at the airports within the next week. There is currently no mandatory clinic reporting requirements for any specific group of travelers.

15. (C) While the government has proceeded cautiously, the recent outbreak has initiated broader health discussions in government including in Saturday's Council of Ministers (i.e., The Cabinet) meeting. The Council is now considering instituting precautionary health screening measures for Omani passengers returning from the Hajj later this year to ward off outbreaks of influenza and other communicable diseases.

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